

Why Schools Resist to Implementation of Total Quality Management: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to determine reasons for the resistance to the implementation of Total Quality Management (TQM) in Iranian high schools. A qualitative method was conducted and convenience sampling method was employed. The sample included 35 high school's principals in Isfahan, Iran. In-depth interview was conducted on these principals. The findings show that the reasons for resistance to the implementation of TQM were classified into five categories, which include lack of understanding on change, lack of abilities to change, lack of communication, lack of commitment, and confidence in the status quo. The comments and suggestions made by school principals can be considered by ministry of education, headquarter of education in Isfahan, educational administrators, and policy makers in field of education in order to create a situation that principals be more flexible to accept changes and implement TQM in their schools.

Keywords: Total quality management, resistance to change, understanding change, abilities to change, communication, commitment, confidence in the status quo

INTRODUCTION

TQM is a statistical process control (Asif, Awan, Khan, & Ahmad, 2013). It was originally developed by Edwards Deming after World War II to improve the quality of products (Bhat & Rajashekhar, 2009) and was first introduced to the Japanese industrial leaders (Svensson & Klefsjo, 2006; Yang, 2005). Although TQM was originally designed for industry, many educators maintained that TQM could also be applied to education system, especially for bringing educational reforms (Dheeraj, 2004). Al-Jammal and Ghamrawi (2013) identified the fact that the application of TQM principles in education could result in improvement in quality and help decrease waste and raise productivity; hence keeping costs low and raising student satisfaction.

However, there are some resistances to implementation of TQM (Bhat & Rajashekhar, 2009; Srivastav, 2011). Resistance to change is defined as a tendency to maintain the status quo when pressure is applied to bring about change in the organization (Barrett, 2012). Most of the reasons for resistance to change in past studies are poor communication, unwavering confidence in the status quo, lack of knowledge about change, lack of abilities to change, and lack of commitment (Ncube & Kajengo, 2000).

The Iranian education system and education experts have always been looking for techniques and strategies to improve the quality of education and keep up with the world standards (Ministry of Education of the I.R. of Iran, 2008). They have been trying to increase the quality of education with improved students' knowledge, continual school improvement efforts, and school benchmarking. It is because of this TQM came to the Iranian education system (Kamali, 2009; Manochehrizadeh, 2011).

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Despite the many efforts to implement TQM in Iranian schools, TQM has not resulted in improvements to a high level as expected (Mirderikvand, 2007), and still there are some resistance to implementation of TQM in Iranian high schools. Having checked with different databases, such as Pro-Quest, and Emerald, limited literature was found focusing on the reasons for resistance to implementation of TQM especially in high school in Isfahan. Therefore, this area is still open for more research. Hence, the present study will attempt to determine the main reasons for resistance to implementation of TQM in Iranian schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Under the current Iranian school culture, structure and patterns, maintenance of current situation, the resistance to change is anticipated. There are some reasons for resistance to change such as: loss of familiar and reliable situations, loss of personal choice and values, possible loss of authority, fear of change, pressure, habit and dependence. Johnston (1999) mentioned that difficulties with understanding, acceptance and acting are some factors for resistance to change. These elements exist because they are part of the inherent nature of any organization. For example, educators have a reputation of finding changes, it is difficult for them to accept because of the stability of the school being threatened. Change always faces resistance in education, therefore, implementation of TQM in school also face with resistance. In every organization, the implementation of TQM needs significant changes. There are some educational, psychological, managerial, economic, cultural and systematic problems to successful implementation of TQM (Toremen, Karakus, & Yasan, 2009). In fact, the success of TQM in a school needs to focus on four components: 1) understanding about the need for change, 2) scientific knowledge, 3) commitment, and 4) communication (Altunay, Arli, & Yalcinkaya, 2012).

The question to be asked here is what are the benefits of TQM for education? In education, TQM has an important role to teaching teachers and principals what students need to learn and the way they learn. In this regard, teaching and learning process must be considered as essential mission of the schools, one that has to be continually improved (Militaru, Ungureanu, & Chenic, 2012). But, why is there resistance to TQM in Iran? Therefore, the aim of this study is to answer two research questions: 1) What are the reasons for resistance to implementation of TQM in schools? and 2) What can be done to reduce this resistance?

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Isfahan, Iran. The participants were 35 high school principals. Convenience sampling was used to choose the sample. The interviewees were contacted by phone calls. Out of 55 school principals called, 35 school principals accepted to participate in the interview. The schools' principals agreed that their school chosen as location for the interviews. Semi-structured interview was used to collect data. Semi-structured interview questions were developed based on research questions and literature. Each interview took between 30 to 40 minutes, was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researchers gave guarantee to participants the information was confidential.

The internal validity of instrument was determined through expert inspection and participant conformation. External validity of instrument was gained through detailed description of the data by the researchers. Internal reliability was obtained through consistency review, whereas external reliability was obtained with confirmation on review.

Data Analysis Methods

Based on the aim of this study, the interviews were transcribed and analyzed. The data were coded based on the categories (See Table 1). The process was carried out inductively that involves examining many small pieces of information and building connection between them. There were then developed based on the code categories.

TABLE 1
Common Code Categories from Resistance to Change

Categories	Items
Lack of understanding change	lack of clear definition of changes, lack of understanding student's needs, lack of scientific knowledge
Lack of abilities to change	Fear of to be unsuccessful, pressure and dependence, barriers to acceptance and acting
Lack of communication	Poor cooperation, poor team working, big gap between talk and action
Lack of commitment	Lack of justification, lack of motivation

Confidence in the status quo	Loss of personal choice and values, fear of change
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FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are divided into two parts based on the research questions in this research. The first part deals with the reasons for resistance to change, and the second part discusses the participants' suggestions.

Lack of Understanding of Change

Regarding to the findings of this study, one of the reasons for resistance to implementation of TQM faced by school's principals was 'principles do not understand change' which were classified into lack of clear definition of changes, lack of understanding of student's needs, and lack of scientific knowledge. Comer and Gates (2004) stated that, if schools were looking for change, they should have focused on understanding what students needed to be successful in today's and the future world. In 2012, Altunay, Arli, and Yalcinkaya reported lack of understanding of change is one of the factors that lead to unsuccessful TQM implementation.

One principal stated that *"When new rule [was] sent to my school, the structure is not enough clear to implementation. There is not any more information about how we must do [the] new rules. That is why I, by myself, do not desire to run changes"*.

Also, some participants believed that *"New educational rules adopted to improve students outcomes, but we are busy and cannot focus on students' needs, and we don't know whether the rules are suitable. In fact, we weren't asked to describe the real needs of students"*.

The results of the interview indicated that the school principals do not have enough time to communicate with students at schools because they are involved in administrative duties. Therefore, they are not familiar about what students want. In fact, the purpose of education system and school is to train students to be ready for high-technology modern world. Therefore, it is important to recognize and focus on students' needs for now and future. To identify students' need, principals must cooperate with teachers, parents and students.

This study has also revealed that all the principals do not have enough knowledge about management, because half of the participants in this study do not have management certificate. It seemed that changes in school must come together with scientific management and have perfect view to strategy, goals, future, etc. One of the principal mentioned that *"When they asked me to do change, I really do not know what I should do, and I am not familiar with scientific management, I have experience in management only. The new rules need new strategy to do, but I don't know it!"*

Lack of Abilities to Change

The principals also lack the ability to change in the implementation of TQM in their school. Lack of abilities to change is categorized into: fear of success, pressure and dependence, and barriers to acceptance and acting. These results match the literature, in which many scholars had highlighted the fact that challenging categories of problem among principals is fear of success (Coe, Rouse, & Krumrei, 2014).

One of principal claimed that *"I am afraid of success because my expectation that being successful will have negative consequences. These negative consequences, such as to lose current position, to be alone, that people do not understand me, and family objection"*.

Some principals highlighted that pressure and dependence are two reasons for resistance to change. One school principal stated that *"Change means renew, so it creates pressure from students, teachers, schools' staff, parents, and community. This pressure put me in a situation that must be independent"*. Another principal believed that *"The change process will be succeeding, if principals have authority. In this situation, we can be innovative and productive"*. Meanwhile, one principal stated, *"Each new rule requires some changes in current process in school. Therefore, to implement the changes we are always faced to some barriers to acceptance and acting"*. It is therefore obvious that principals need a power to change and that their power can be given by authority so that they can make decisions.

Lack of Communication

The results also indicate that, lack of communication among principals which refers to poor cooperation, poor team working, and gap between talking and acting. This is supported by Ncube and Kajengo (2000) who

reported these items resulted from poor communication between school's staffs and principals. Rampa (2010; 2004) reported that to achieve changes in school, cooperation between principal, teachers, students and parents is required. The findings illustrated that there is a relationship between cooperation and success in change. Therefore, while cooperation is weak between schools' staff, we cannot expect to undertake change successfully.

Teacher abilities to make decision and teamwork can create a suitable condition to implement change easily. When asked about relationship between teamwork and change implementation, one principal said, "*Teamwork is a way to divide sub-ordinate duties to do and it increase efficiency and decrease faults*". It is clear that team work not only empowers schools' staff and students but also improves performance.

Often participants agree with team work and accept its good impact. One principal noted, "*When I involve in a process to change, I enjoy being member of a team, because outcomes of team working has many results can be useful for this time and the future!*"

Unfortunately, many rules for change are so far detached from the real situation, because the person, who adopt new change's rules and define items of change's process, is not so familiar with the culture of organization where the changes have been designed for it. Therefore, there is a difference between talking and acting. One of principal said "*Always, there is distance between what say to do and what do really. This difference is normal because change designer does not know the organization culture in-depth. In other words, he/she has not enough knowledge about where the changes must be done here, what may happen in implementing process or in the near of future, then they suggest many solutions, but some of them cannot be used to solve the problems that happened!*"

Lack of Commitment

Many researchers argued that staff involvement in change process can help to achieve the organization goals (Bessant & Caffyn, 1997; O'Brien, 1995). Likewise, staff will get involved when they feel justice in organization. Feeling about justice leads to increase staff commitment to organization and process. A principal believed that "*If I do not feel justice and cannot see results of my efforts, I judge that my school has not enough attention/regards to me*".

Another factor that affect principals' performance is motivation. One principal stated "*I do not like doing working hard to implement change and to run its rules, when I find that my efforts have not an award!*" Another principal highlighted that this motivation is not only in money: "*I think that doing of every hard work needs a motivation such as money, acknowledgement, and high job position, etc.*" In fact, there is a relationship between motivation and commitment. One of participants mentioned that "*If I want to implement change successfully in my schools, I should have more commitment schools' staff. Staffs' commitment is reached when I have a good motivation and efforts are rewarded by award and acknowledgement*".

Confidence in the Status Quo

Implementation of any new rule involves change. This change occurs in structures, processes, and situations, etc. In other way, when we run a change strategy, we put a new rule to do duties that leads to limit owner choices. One of the principals says that "*while I prepare needs to run change plan, I should talk to staffs about challenges happened to owner choices and plan choices. Therefore, schools' staff cannot choose any option which it was based on their aims and values!*"

According to results of these interviews, most participants believed that loss of personal choice and values are very important factor affected by the change. This fear of change is due to fear of loss position or authority, absence of reward, new culture, and etc. Many principals and schools' staffs fear change, because previous process, views and attitudes would be changed. One principal stated, "*Every time I receive a new rule that should be implemented, many staffs stand against on it. They are accustomed to previous process and habits, so they resist to change and renovation.*"

Suggestion for Reduce Resistance of TQM

The second research question is focused on suggestions to reduce resistance of implementation of TQM in schools based on principals' opinions. The comments made by principals are as follows:

- Clear structure on how to implement the new rules. The structure can be illustrated by graphs and tables.
- Principals need more in-service course related to students' needs.

- Employ people who have management qualifications for the principals' position in school
- Reduce bureaucracy
- Train principals with new management knowledge before they want to get the principal position.
- Encourage and motivate principals to accept new changes
- Give more authority to schools' principals.
- Hold monthly meeting for all schools' principals to improve inter-communication.
- Include principles of TQM in curriculum.
- Empower principals, teachers, and school staff.

CONCLUSION

All in all, based on findings there are some reasons for the resistance on the implementation of TQM in Iranian schools, such as lack of understanding change, lack of abilities to change, lack of communication, lack of commitment, and confidence in the status quo. Based on the findings, the authors suggest that policy makers involve principals to decision making, prepare pre and in service courses for them, provide more training courses for all school staff, integrate the elements of TQM into the curriculum, and employ people who have management qualifications for the principals' positions in schools. More research can also be conducted to find out reasons for resistance to implementation of TQM in schools.

The findings of this study are limited only to high school in Isfahan, Iran. Thus, the outcomes of this study cannot be generalized to the whole population of schools in Iran. Future studies could be carried out among schools in other provinces to confirm the results of this study. More research can also be conducted to compare the reasons for implementation TQM between secondary schools and high schools in Iran.

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